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Meeting Minutes

Commission for Blacks

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Meeting Minutes - February 2012

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Minutes for Commission for Blacks Meeting February

Call to Order: Dr. Camille Hall called the meeting to order at 12:00pm.

In Attendance: Camille Hall, Ron Tredway, Marva Rudolph, Joann Jeter, Philippa Satterwhite, Richard Stokes, Fletcher Njororai, Nanette Rodgers, Denelle Brown, Jenny Moshak, and Avery Howard.

1. Review of November Minutes: After review, an e-mailed change was previously updated and the minutes were approved.

2. Report from the Chair: The Chairs of the Commission for Blacks, Commission for Women (Mary Papke), and Commission for LGBT People (Jenny Moshak/Tom Cervone) had breakfast with Provost Martin last week. The Chairs discussed recent changes at UTK; establishing a cabinet level Diversity Officer position for the campus, they also sent an email follow-up message to Dr. Martin. Provost Martin agreed that she would meet and speak with the Chancellor; in her e-mail response Dr. Martin indicated that she and Margie Nichols had met with and discussed the chairpersons concerns with Dr. Cheek. Jenny Moshak reiterated the need for continued persistent in pushing for this position.

The Chairs also discussed the Campus Climate Survey. The discussion of the survey originated from the Council on Diversity and Interculturalism (CDI); all commission chairpersons co-signed the letter that was forwarded to the chancellor. There was some concern regarding socio-demographic data collection on. Jenny Moshak stated there was very limited or no information race, disabilities, LGBT, and relationships. The Chancellor's response indicated UTK has to be cognizant of confidentiality and know that we cannot collect information without a disclaimer. Marva Rudolph stated incorporating diverse data into this survey is important for the commission to continue to pursue. She also stated CDI has taken this issue very seriously.

The BLACK@UT newsletter will be published in April. Dr. Hall reminded the commission that the newsletter would be published annually versus biannually. Dr. Hall requested ideas for a theme for this year's issue, e.g., social justice as way to highlight the 50th anniversary of African American Achievements, etc. This year's issue will feature articles based on the interviews of Rita Geier and Charles & Annazette Houston. The Chair encouraged commissioners to submit articles. Avery Howard, undergraduate student representative, asked if the newsletter would highlight the Chancellor's Citation and Chancellor's Honors Banquet. Dr. Hall stated the newsletter would be published after these events to include highlights.

3. Black Issues Conference: Avery Howard announced the 7th Annual Black Issues Conference would be held on February 18, 2012 at the University Center on campus. This event is open to everyone (students, faculty, staff, and the community). Registration opens at 9:30am and the conference starts at 10am. The conference will conclude at 3pm with a reception immediately following. The Keynote Speaker will be Kevin Powell who is a political activist and author. There will be a reception where Mr. Powell will have a book signing. The conference is free and open to the public (lunch is free and provided if you register). CFB provided \$500.00 in support of this event. The Chair encouraged participation.

4. Community Forum: The Commission Chairs discussed the best way to engage UTK and the surrounding community to address diversity initiatives and moving forward. Jenny Moshak stated while planning is in the early stages, they discussed the idea of a community forum to jump-start a dialogue. The dialogue will be one way to ensure key stakeholders provide input on the Chief Diversity Officer position. In addition, this effort will hopefully help establish a basis for the Chief Diversity Officer position, while identifying benchmarks regarding the state diversity. The forum will be open to everyone on campus and the surrounding community. The forum will identify the needs are for diversity on this campus. The Chairs are in the process of formalizing goals and objectives and seeking funding. The goal is to host the forum early fall, 2012. The Chair stated Commission for LGBT co-chair, Tom Cervone would like more input from students. Dr. Hall asked that Avery Howard and Will Parrot bring students together to work with the LGBT Commission to ensure that student ideas and their voices will be heard.

Dr. Hall stated she'd received an email (i.e., January 2012) from Patricia Jones, indicating she would no longer be able serve on the commission. Due to this situation the Chair asked the commission for discussion as to whether or not a spring community forum should take place. The discussion resulted in the commissioners voting to cancel the spring forum.

5. Access and Diversity Staff Retention Fund: Philippa Satterwhite stated the committee met on January 26, 2012 to discuss goals. Philippa met with Access Fund staff on January 27, 2012. Philippa expressed the need for more advertisement regarding the fund, there is also one change, and application submissions are now required one month before conferences. Ms. Satterwhite also stated that she does not believe there should be a requirement (per CFB Bylaws) for this committee to help with the fund since neither committee member is on the university committee. The committee recommends streamlining their efforts to advertising versus being on the fund committee. Instead, the committee will work on identifying places, people, and where to advertise to build interest and branch out to others will be a goal. Marva Rudolph emphasized the fund being open to everyone contributing to a diverse perspective and not just for people of color. The graduate assistant can post information to the website as received by the committee to promote advertisement. Dr. Hall asked Philippa to send suggestions for proposed amendment(s) to the Bylaws committee; the same request was extended to all of the commissioners.

6. Bylaws Committee: Marva Rudolph and Ron Tredway met this week and had discussions with the Chair. Marva stated the Chair asked this committee to look at how to nominate elected officers. Marva stated the committee wants to develop a process to be discussed with the commission next month. Marva asked commissioners to think about persons they would like to nominate for chair of the commission. During the committee meeting questions were raised after reviewing the bylaws. Ron stated the questions the committee have are to bring greater clarification to offset any potential for confusion. The chair stated individuals should forward recommendations for proposed changes to the bylaws to Marva Rudolph, Chairperson, and courtesy copy the Chair. The Chair requested the committee to finalize proposed amendments and changes before February 29, 2012 (i.e., before the executive committee meeting). Doing so will enable the executive committee to review the recommendations before the March 7, 2012 CFB meeting. Bylaws online do not reflect the changes made earlier in the year because they have to be approved by the Chancellor.

7. Faculty and Staff Committees: Denelle Brown informed the Chair stated Maxine Thompson-Davis could not be at the meeting. Dr. Thompson-Davis relayed the following information: she conversed with Jeff Nichols about providing access to non-exempt staff, particularly dining services staff, which may not have direct access to e-mail to be able to receive information from commissions and other sources. Since there have been changes in administration she has set up meetings with Assistant Vice Chancellor Dave Irvin. Assistant Vice Chancellor Irvin is now responsible for these areas and Maxine will discuss what could be done to examine different strategies to connect the non-exempt staff with those resources.

8. Student Concerns Committees: Avery Howard announced the Student Government Association and the Diversity Affairs Committee is planning diversity week. Diversity week will take place March 12-16, 2012. Avery will forward updated information as received, to Michell Greenidge. Mr. Howard plans to email the chancellor with a message that the UTK administrative maintain the momentum for the Civility Initiatives set forth last year.

9. Awards Committee: Denelle Brown stated the deadline for submitting awards nominations is approaching. The African American Hall of Fame Award submission deadline is February 2, 2012. The Hardy Liston Jr. Symbol of Hope Award submission deadline is February 3, 2012. The Gene Mitchell Gray Pioneer Award submission deadline is February 3, 2012. CFB awards nomination submission deadline is February 17, 2012. An electronic voting ballot will be sent out on February 8, 2012. The African American Hall of Fame Award nominee can be a person from the external community as long as they made a significant contribution to UTK. Denelle also stated the Carl Cowan scholarship has four \$1000 scholarships for students. This scholarship is open to all students. The deadline for submitting applications is February 15, 2012.

10. Human Resources: Ron Tredway stated the Compensation and Advisory Board suggested the development of an Employee of Choice Model at each UT campus. Ron described the model as a conceptual view depicting 'if this was the most desirable place for employees, what would it look like?' Ron handed out a diagram of the UTK model, and described the phases showing characteristics of how UTK looks today, areas in which it is progressing or needing/desiring to progress, and how it will look when it is a much stronger employer of choice environment. Ron stated he is sharing this with the commission to bring awareness and to ask for ideas and/or feedback to assist in this effort. Jenny Moshak asked Ron why diversity related recommendations previously shared in Commission meetings were not on this model and suggested they be added. Ron acknowledged Jenny's input and stated he would like more detailed feedback to capture what specifics may be missing. Feedback and ideas should be sent to rtredway@utk.edu, and he will forward them to the UTK Team, and CAB as warranted.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm, next meeting is Wednesday, March 7, 2012, noon, Multipurpose room in the Black Cultural Center.